

## Who they are/What they do?

### About The Regulator

The Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority (Financial Regulator) was established on 1 May 2003. The Financial Regulator is responsible for the regulation of all financial services firms in Ireland. It also has an important role in the protection of the consumers of those firms. As Financial Services Regulator its main tasks are:

- Help consumers to make informed decisions on their financial affairs in a safe and fair market; and
- Foster sound, growing and solvent financial institutions which give consumers confidence that their deposits and investments are secure.

The Financial Regulator is a distinct component of the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland, with clearly defined regulatory responsibilities. These cover all Irish financial institutions including those previously regulated by the Central Bank, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE), Office of the Director of Consumer Affairs (ODCA) and Registrar of Friendly Societies.

The Financial Regulator contributes to the work of the Central Bank in discharging its responsibility in relation to the maintenance of overall financial stability.

### Consumer Protection

In providing consumer protection, its focus is on problem prevention:

- They provide consumers with information about the costs, risks and benefits of financial products and services, helping them make informed decisions on their finances. For more information, see [www.itsyourmoney.ie](http://www.itsyourmoney.ie)
- They monitor competition in the market for financial services and work with the Competition Authority.
- They promote the interests of consumers of financial products.
- They impose and enforce rules on financial services firms regarding how they deal with consumers, particularly how they sell financial products.

### Consumer Rights

As a consumer of financial services you have rights in relation to how a regulated firm deals with you. Financial institutions must comply with Code of Conduct rules, which oblige them to act in a fair and transparent manner when dealing with consumers. If you have a problem with financial products or services they will provide assistance.

They provide information and assistance to consumers who have a general service complaint, e.g. charges, quality of service, administrative errors as well as enquiries about a firm, product or service.

### Promoting a Sound Financial System

A fundamental protection for consumers is the solvency and safety of financial institutions. The Financial Regulator has a key responsibility in this area by giving confidence to consumers that their deposits and investments are safe and that their claims can be met. In turn, this contributes to a stable financial system and to the reputation and good standing of the Irish financial sector. The financial services industry is increasingly global in scale and influence. This poses challenges to both the industry and its regulator. Monitoring global financial and economic developments is an important element of our job.

The focus of work in this area will be on:

- The refinement of a regulatory approach based on risk profile and impact of default;
- Risk assessment, measurement and control techniques in all sectors of the industry;
- Data collection associated with developing better early warning indicators of prudential stress;
- A programme of on-site inspections.

The Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland Act, 2003, led to the establishment of the new Financial Services Regulator. The Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland Act 2004 Act created a statutory financial services ombudsman for consumers. Consultative consumer and industry panels have also been appointed where matters of policy and practice can be discussed. In addition, this legislation created new enforcement powers for the Financial Regulator including fining and public censure powers.